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MANAGING YOUR WOODLAND

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HOW TO DO IT GUIDES

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WOODLAND PROTECTION---FIRE PREVENTION

Fire can destroy or damage your woodlands in a few hours and eliminate values that have taken years to develop. A little advance planning or work may prevent such a fire or limit the damage to a very small area.



It takes three things to make a fire burn---FUEL, AIR and HEAT.

Fuel and air are always present in a woodland area. If enough heat is supplied to ignite the fuel, a fire can be started. Fire prevention is usually aimed at elimination of the source of heat. However, this is not always the method. Sometimes the more flammable fuels can be removed or kept away from the source of heat. In this way, a fire is prevented by removal of the fuel. Heat in sufficient quantity to ignite fuel is sometimes caused by

lightning, but is much more frequently a result of man's carelessness with equipment, fires or smoking.

Two general approaches to prevention of forest fires are: (1) education of people to make them more fire conscious and (2) closure of hazardous areas to entry and use during periods of high fire danger. The KEEP GREEN program is one of the more effective educational methods. The fire prevention messages are



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presented by radio, television, newspapers, posters and talks at schools and other groups. Closure of hazardous areas during the fire season, and shut down of all woods operations during periods of extreme fire danger, prevents fires from starting where control might be very difficult. However, each woodland owner can assist in the prevention of fires on his own lands.

Following are some of the more common causes of forest fires and some ways that you can reduce the chance of fire in your woodland.

Fire Causes and Prevention Methods

(1) Debris Burning Use of fire to dispose of refuse, grass, paper and other debris is a common practice. Burning should be done at a safe spot in a cleared or fire-proofed area. Before starting such a fire, check with your local fire protection agency. During the closed fire season, in areas where a permit is required, a warden will inspect the burning site, specify any needed safety precautions, and will then issue a permit. Do not leave the fire unattended and be sure the fire is completely extinguished before leaving.

(2) Slash Disposal Elimination of logging debris by burning is usually a good practice. By burning this material in the fall or winter, the area can be fire-proofed so there is little burnable material remaining in which a fire can start when conditions are more hazardous. This will also permit the landowner to obtain a slash hazard release so he will not be liable for fire suppression costs of future fires on the area. Disposal of accumulations of debris, slash or other flammable material will lessen the danger of fires being set by incendiaries or children.

Slash burning requires advance preparation to keep the fire from spreading to adjacent lands. In clear-cut areas, this would include construction of a fireline around the area to be burned and falling of snags.

In partial-cut areas, excess accumulations should be piled in larger openings for burning. A burning permit must be obtained during the fire season but this does not relieve the permittee from the responsibility of controlling the burning. He must provide the manpower and equipment necessary to keep the fire from spreading to adjacent areas.

(3) Equipment Operation This includes fires caused by the operation of power saws, tractors, trucks and other power-driven equipment. Sparks from the exhaust system will start fires if they fall on dry materials. Adequate mufflers or spark arresters will break up these hot pieces of carbon so there is not sufficient heat to ignite the fuels. Fires are sometimes started by the power saw exhaust igniting adjacent fuels. Spilling gasoline on the hot muffler or starting the saw at a spot where gasoline was spilled may also cause a fire. These fires can be prevented by using care when filling or operating the saw. Keep a fire extinguisher and shovel with the saw, as required by State law, to control the spread of any fires that may start.

(4) Smokers Burning tobacco or matches may start a fire wherever smokers use an area. Care in extinguishing such material would prevent these fires. In areas heavily used by people, it may be desirable to prepare a fireline around the use area to limit the spread of a fire. This may not prevent a fire but it will confine it and make the suppression much easier.

(5) Campers or Picnickers Fires caused by recreationists are usually not a serious problem except where flammable areas are selected for camping and picnicking. One solution is to limit the use of such areas by campers and picnickers. Most people respect "no smoking", "no campfire" and "fire closure" signs posted in hazardous areas. If there are sites in your woodland community used by campers or picnickers, development of safe spots for the campfires will prevent the spread of such fires.

(6) Lightning Lightning fires are usually started in snags or rotten trees. Falling or harvesting the snags and defective trees will prevent most lightning strikes from starting fires. If a fire is started, it will be on the ground where control is easier.

Other Fire Prevention Practices

Posting a woodland area with "no trespassing" signs may prevent some fires by keeping people out of your woodlands. However, this is difficult to enforce and may antagonize some people causing them to set fires in the area. Also, authorized users of the area can still cause fires.

One of the most effective fire prevention factors on a woodland area is a complete stocking of trees. A well-stocked stand of trees, 10 feet or more in height, will reduce the probability of accidental fires. The tree tops prevent most of the sun's rays from reaching the ground to dry the surface fuels. This means that more heat is needed to start a fire. The stand of trees also limits the ground speed of drying winds. Lack of sunlight will eliminate or lessen the growth of many plants, such as grass and fern, which create a fire hazard in open areas. A fully stocked woodland will have fewer fires and

fires will be easier to control than on cut-over or poorly stocked forest lands.

Fire laws and regulations have been enacted to prevent forest fires by restricting use or making certain acts illegal. These laws were designed to protect your woodland and all other forests in the State. Every woodland owner and user should comply with the requirements. The cooperation of all owners, users and fire protection agencies is necessary to PREVENT FOREST FIRES.

---FOREST LAND WORTH HAVING
IS WORTH PROTECTING---

